



**MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
VIA LINDA SENIOR CENTER—Room 4
10440 N. VIA LINDA, SCOTTSDALE AZ 85259
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2006
5:00PM**

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION

Art DeCabooter, Chairman
Christina Kovach, Vice-Chair
Carla
Joan Fudala
Melinda Gulick
Virginia Korte
Gerry Miller
Arnold Roy
Linda Whitehead
Solange Whitehead

ABSENT: Erik Filsinger

STAFF: Bob Cafarella, City Preservation Officer
Scott Hamilton
Don Meserve, Preservation Manager

PRESENT: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Donn Loper, Chairman
Shelley Anderson, Vice-Chair
Dean Cerimeli (arrived at 5:08 p.m.)
John Faramelli
Robert Frost
Ron King
Ronald Petersen

ABSENT:

STAFF: Leslie Clark
Jim Saunders
Judy Weiss, Parks and Recreation Director

ALSO PRESENT: Phil Weddle, Principal Architect, Weddle Gilmore Architects
Rose Williams, Parks & Grounds Management Manager

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman DeCabooter called the special meeting to order at 5:04 p.m., requesting a roll-call. Commissioners present stated their respective names on the record, confirming attendance of Commissioners from each Commission as noted above.

2. CONCEPTUAL PLAN FOR THE GATEWAY ACCESS AREA IN THE McDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE—PRESENTATION BY DESIGN CONSULTANT AND DISCUSSION/COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONS

Bob Cafarella addressed the meeting, noting the promise to return each year to discuss an additional access area to be developed in the Preserve. The Sunrise area was addressed two years prior. Sunrise is now open, to the satisfaction of many. Mr. Cafarella reported that Lost Dog Wash, last year's discussion, is currently under construction and invited Commissioners to attend the May 20th opening.

The access area for current discussion is one Mr. Cafarella noted as the most significant access area in the Preserve: the Gateway. The Gateway access area was specifically selected to accommodate any type of use. The other unique aspect of the Gateway Access Area is the hopeful addition of the Desert Discovery Center. Although funding is not currently in place for a potential Desert Discovery Center, the concept of the Center is being considered in tandem with designing the Gateway, to ensure that the two will be compatible.

Mr. Cafarella distributed a document depicting the five-to-seven year program of improvements. He explained that the light color represents improvements that have been constructed and are currently in place. The Gateway trails are under construction; some of which will be developed in conjunction with the Gateway Access Area construction. He noted future plans consisting of one additional access area in the Preserve, identified as the North Access Area, which is in the McDowell Mountain portion of the Preserve, as well as the capital program planned for the State land. He cited that the passage of "Preserving Arizona's Future" will be important as it deals with State Trust Land.

In response to inquiry by Commissioner Frost, Mr. Cafarella clarified that the green color depicted on the chart represents land contained in the Preserve boundary. The City owns all of the private land contained in the boundary or the private land has been protected through zoning. The sections not owned by the City are State Trust Land which are included in the citizen's initiative and would become part of the Preserve.

Phil Weddle, Architect, addressed the meeting. Mr. Weddle presented a brief overview regarding the status of the design process, highlighting completion of the conceptual

design for both the Gateway and the Desert Discovery Center. A public open house is scheduled for February 16th in order to obtain input on the proposed designs to date.

Highlights of Mr. Weddle's presentation included a vicinity map of Gateway, a diagram depicting tie-in of trails from outside of the Preserve and an explanation of the trails system. The master plan provides for a total of 500 parking spaces; 250 spaces developed in each phase of the project.

In response to inquiry by Commissioner Faramelli regarding the area west of Thompson Peak, Mr. Weddle confirmed that the area is residential, consisting of the Wind Gate Ranch development. The entry to Gateway is located adjacent to the entry into Wind Gate and access will be shared. A signalized intersection is planned for the future. The entry to Gateway is also gated and can be closed off in the evening. The facilities will generally be open from dawn-to-dusk. An equestrian staging area located to the south contains approximately 24 trailer spaces. Parking facilities will have lighting when the Desert Discovery Center is developed. Security level lighting will be installed and will likely be used unless evening activities are held which require parking lot lighting.

In response to inquiry by Commissioner Faramelli, Mr. Cafarella confirmed that the developer is very knowledgeable of the City's plans concerning the Gateway. Vice-Chair Kovach identified that the developer is Toll Brothers.

Commissioner Faramelli noted the matter of disclosing the proposed lighting to potential buyers. In the course of further discussion regarding residential neighborhoods in the vicinity, Commissioner Solange Whitehead noted that DC Ranch residents are aware of the project.

In response to inquiry by Chairman Loper, Mr. Weddle explained that the area in gray on the chart is a service access and is part of the Desert Discovery Center. Continuing with the presentation, Mr. Weddle explained that the parking is being organized in an east-west orientation in order to accommodate the natural drainage flows through the site. Efforts are being expended to preserve as much of the native vegetation as possible.

Commissioner Faramelli questioned whether the Gateway has any trail relationship to WestWorld. Mr. Weddle confirmed that the trails do connect all the way down through WestWorld. Mr. Hamilton elaborated that there will be an underpass under Thompson Peak Parkway connecting the Gateway site to the bridge under Bell Road, which connects to the public access trailhead in WestWorld. Trail easement dedication across the Toll property will be secured through is a stipulation requiring dedications as plats come forward.

Mr. Weddle continued the presentation, noting a significant landscape area between the drop-off area and the buildings. The Gateway Access Area is essentially comprised of the entry plaza, the view terrace, the proposed office, restroom, and storage facilities along with a pedestrian bridge that links across the washing crossing. The Desert Discovery Center, as it is currently being planned, includes an outdoor amphitheatre, exhibition and interpretive areas, multi-purpose rooms, and a support wing including administrative offices and catering kitchens. An additional component of the Discovery Center includes a cafe.

In response to questions by Vice-Chair Anderson, Mr. Weddle reiterated the parking spaces assigned for horse trailers and explained the bypass trail that connects to the major trails. A tie-off area for horses could be considered near the cafe.

Vice-Chair Anderson suggested that equestrians may enjoy the option of riding up to the cafe for refreshments. Mr. Cafarella opined that the suggestion is a good point that should be considered. Mr. Weddle explained that the staging area will serve many purposes, including accommodation of group equestrian rides.

Upon inquiry by Chairman Loper regarding construction materials, Mr. Weddle presented a view of the west elevation of the Gateway/DDC. He noted the expressed desire of presenting a sense of the scale of the facility relative to the surrounding landscape and noted the importance of avoiding obscured views of the mountains. He addressed the proposed forms of the buildings and noted the proposed use of Corten steel on the western elevation. The eastern elevation will be protected with deep overhangs and shade elements on the terrace.

Commissioner Faramelli asked about the driveway. Mr. Weddle explained that the driveway comes in along the east elevation.

Chairman Loper asked if input or design advice has been requested for the project from the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. He elaborated that upon his visit to the site, he did not see any aspects in the design that might take advantage of afternoon breezes. Mr. Weddle noted that there are elements from Taliesin West case studies that are considered in this project, such as the entry plazas and the creation of shaded areas.

Commissioner Kovach commented about the increased number of people who remain in the Valley during the summer months and asked what things make this a facility that can be used during the summer. Mr. Weddle noted specific shaded areas in particular as well as the Desert Discovery Center amphitheater and multi-purpose space which could accommodate indoor activities.

In response to questions by Commissioner Faramelli regarding the amphitheater, Mr. Weddle acknowledged that there is no shading in the amphitheater. Proposed activities in the amphitheatre include catered events, lecture presentations, and various types of demonstrations.

Addressing questions by Chairman Loper regarding construction materials for the amphitheatre, Mr. Weddle noted that materials will include a combination of concrete for the retaining walls and stabilized decomposed granite for the flooring. He also noted that the Desert Discovery Center is currently being viewed from the master plan level and many of the details pertaining to the Desert Discovery Center have yet to be discussed.

Further discussion ensued regarding the meaning of shading and various options for providing shade.

In response to inquiry by Commissioner Fudala regarding ADA facility features, Mr. Weddle confirmed that all areas will be accessible and explained that the grades inside of the public access areas will be on level surfaces with ramp access. The decomposed granite on the trails up through the interpretive trails will be a stabilized material.

Commissioner Carla clarified that the Desert Discovery Center was on a separate track but it made more sense to the Tourism group looking at the project to consider the Center and the Gateway Access Area together. The project that is actually funded and going forward at this time is the public portion of the Gateway Access Area.

In response to comments and questions by Vice-Chair Kovach in relation to after-hours activities and folks entering the Preserve, Mr. Cafarella explained that a barrier could be setup in the wash at the close of business which would prevent people from entering the Preserve. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Cafarella reiterated that the Discovery Center is considered conceptual at this time and the issue of allowing evening functions at the Center will continue to be discussed, as well as the appropriateness of the proposed cafe. Mr. Cafarella stated that the Desert Discovery Center is a conceptual puzzle piece that fits and can do so at any time; whether it is constructed a year from now or five years down the road. The Gateway Access Area will be under construction in the Fall of 2006 and open in the Spring of 2007.

Upon inquiry by Commissioner Faramelli regarding the Park Commission's involvement, Mr. Cafarella noted that the intent is to present this proposal, as well as future proposals, to the Park Commission as an information study item. The Preserve Commission is very interested in the comments posed by Park Commissioners. Neither the Park Commission nor the Preserve Commission will be in the official process of approval; approval will be determined by the Planning Commission, the Development Review Board and City Council.

Discussion ensued regarding issuance of a municipal use permit. Mr. Cafarella noted that such a permit is not actually required, however, a use permit has been signed off on in order to obtain relief from major access areas. Commissioner Faramelli questioned whether the municipal use process offered necessary assistance in public awareness and full disclosure of the project to the community. Noting that contact has been made with Toll, McDowell Mountain Ranch, DC Ranch and user groups, Mr. Cafarella reported that extensive public interaction has occurred. Commissioner Faramelli suggested devising a type of full disclosure for all subsequent residents of the Toll project that will specifically inform potential buyers of the proposed plans, including the proposed Desert Discovery Center. Mr. Cafarella agreed, noting that a large sign at the location will indicate what is coming. Mr. Weddle reported that the municipal use site plan will include the Desert Discovery Center as a second phase prior to approval.

Vice-Chair Anderson suggested posting a large sign that says: "Future home of " along with a drawing of the finished plan as an additional disclosure method.

Noting that concrete retains heat, Vice-Chair Anderson questioned when the amphitheatre would be used during the summer. Mr. Weddle reiterated that plans include the use of concrete primarily for the retaining walls around the perimeter. A stabilized decomposed granite will be used to construct the surface where activities will occur. He, however, opined that without shade over the amphitheatre, it will likely have limited use through the summer.

Mr. Cafarella explained that a number of people from the Tourism industry are serving as members of the Committee assigned to assist with development of the Discovery Center. Most of their activities will not occur in the hot part of the summer. There will potentially be some things occurring in the evening during the summer. Vice-Chair Anderson stressed that many tourists are not accustomed to the heat and suggested that the issue be considered. Commissioner Gulick concurred, but opined that there is a great benefit in the view of the mountains from a non-shaded amphitheatre at that particular site. She noted the desire to balance a shade structure that will not obscure the view with year round use of the amphitheatre and suggested that the issue be revisited by the Planning Committee.

Chairman Loper addressed concerns surrounding the occurrence of people getting stuck in the Preserve on occasion. Mr. Cafarella noted that there are many things that will be done to address these concerns, elaborating on the establishment of the GPS system which will allow emergency people to determine the exact location of a caller. Chairman Loper stated that the GPS system is predicated on the assumption that there will be cell phone service in the Preserve, noting the recent unapproved request to install a cell tower in the Preserve. Mr. Cafarella affirmed the assumption and reported that very ominous warning signage will be installed as an additional measure. Additionally, the Conservancy is providing citizens and the tourism industry with information regarding the necessities one should have when entering the Preserve.

Recalling a visit to Bryce Canyon, Chairman Loper suggested the installation of a metal box containing a sign-in sheet at the trailhead, which also requests the expected time and date of return. The park ranger would then monitor the sign-in sheet periodically and would then have knowledge of persons who failed to return or a possible emergency situation. Mr. Cafarella reported that the suggestion has been discussed; however, attorney's express great concern that this practice could result in the City being liable or responsible. Mr. Cafarella acknowledged the possibility of implementing a similar type of practice at the Gateway, noting that between the City and the Conservancy, there will likely be someone at the Gateway location during operating hours. Mr. Cafarella thanked Commissioners for their comments and suggestions.

In response to inquiry by Vice-Chair Anderson, Mr. Cafarella acknowledged that the issue of separate trails for equestrians and people will continue to be discussed, but explained that the trails are multi-use in an effort to minimize the impact on the resource.

Commissioner Carla noted that an additional concern about splitting off trails also factors in the splitting of habitat. That is a primary reason that trails are made to work for everyone. She also noted the importance of teaching trail etiquette.

Addressing the cell phone coverage issue, Commissioner Solange Whitehead, stated that the Preserve Commission is not opposed to cell coverage, noting as an aside that there is excellent cell phone coverage throughout the Preserve. She also opined that there are many ways of obtaining cell phone service throughout the Preserve that do not involve installing equipment in the Preserve.

Upon inquiry by Commissioner Miller regarding the design guidelines for the ADA trails, Mr. Weddle stated that the requirements are from ADA. Mr. Hamilton reported that the Federal Highway Administration produced documentation regarding recreational facilities including trails. An additional resource being used is the City's ADA coordinator. He

also noted plans to engage members of the community that would use the trails. Mr. Cafarella added that the hope is to appeal to the entire ADA community, not just those that are motorized.

Chairman DeCabooter opened the floor for public comments.

3. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

No comments.

4. ADJOURNMENT OF JOINT MEETING

With no further business to discuss, and no need for an executive session, the joint meeting adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
A/V Tronics, Inc.